

The Examiner rejected claim 1 indicating that Murakimi et al. discloses an optical connecting article including a main body comprising a flexible substrate (42) and a plurality of optical fibers mounted so as to lie in a common plane upon the substrate, the optical fibers (2) arranged in a plurality of groups proximate an edge of the substrate with each group including at least one optical fiber, the optical fibers of a first group extending toward the optical fibers of a second group and a plurality of legs (43) extending outwardly from the edge of the main body, each leg comprising the optical fibers of a respective group and a matrix material for binding the optical fibers of the respective group together, the legs disposed in a stacked configuration in which at least one leg overlies another leg such that at least one leg lies at least partially outside of the common plane. The Examiner referred to Figs. 12-15. Office Action at pp. 2-3. However, the reference does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention as suggested by the Examiner.

Claim 1 requires that the plurality of legs be disposed in a stacked configuration in which at least one leg overlies another leg such that at least one leg lies at least partially outside of the common plane. The common plane, as recited in the claim, is the plane where the optical fibers lie on the flexible substrate. As such, and as explained in the specification at pages 9-10 and shown in particular in Figs. 2 & 3, one of the legs of the optical fibers leave the common plane and hence the flexible substrate. In contrast, the optical fibers in Murakimi et al. do not leave the plane of the flexible substrate. The abstract indicates that the “plurality of optical fibers are distributed in an encapsulated states and in a planar shape.” Lines 3-4.

See also Fig. 5 showing the fibers in the plane of the flexible substrate 11. With respect to the

figures cited by the Examiner, the flexible substrate (main bodies 32 and 42, Figs. 13 and 14-15, respectively) is able to bend, however the legs of the optical fibers do not overlie one another at least partially outside of the plane of the flexible substrate, i.e., common plane. Therefore, Murakimi et al. does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention and claim 1 is allowable for at least this reason.

Claims 2-5, depending from allowable claim 1, are also allowable for at least the same reason. However, those claims contain other elements or limitations that are also not disclosed or suggested in Murakimi et al. For example, claim 2 requires, inter alia, that the second group of optical fibers overlies the first group of optical fibers while the first group is supported by the flexible substrate. No such structure is disclosed or suggested in Murakimi et al. In fact, Fig. 12, the figure referred to by the Examiner, indicates that all of the fibers are supported by the substrate and that none of the optical fibers overlie other optical fibers. Additionally, claim 3 requires, inter alia, that a first fiber connector is mounted upon the plurality of legs in the stacked configuration. Again, Fig. 12, referred to by the Examiner as disclosing this claim element, does not disclose or suggest a first connector (a single connector) mounted to a plurality of legs in a stacked configuration. In fact, there is a single connector for each of the legs and not a single connector for multiple legs in Murakimi et al. Therefore, this claim and the other claims depending from claim 1 are also allowable.

The Examiner rejected claim 6 indicating that Murakimi et al. discloses an optical connecting article including a main body comprising a flexible substrate (42) and a plurality of optical fibers mounted upon the substrate, the optical fibers arranged in a plurality of groups

proximate an edge of the substrate with each group including at least one optical fiber and a plurality of legs (43) extending outwardly from the main body in a stacked configuration in which at least one leg overlies another leg, each leg comprising the optical fibers of a respective group and a matrix material for binding the optical fibers of the respective group together, the matrix material of at least one leg comprising a coating such that the respective leg is independent of the flexible substrate. The Examiner referred to Figs. 12-15. Office Action at pp. 3-4. However, the reference does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention as suggested by the Examiner.

Claim 6 requires, inter alia, a plurality of legs extending outwardly from the main body in a stacked configuration in which at least one leg overlies another leg. See also Fig. 2. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Murakimi et al. that the optical fibers extend outwardly in a stacked configuration. In fact, all of the optical fibers in the reference are attached to the flexible substrate in flat configuration. See Abstract at ll. 3-4. Claim 6 in the present application also requires that matrix material of at least one leg comprises a coating such that the respective leg is independent of the flexible substrate. Nowhere in Murakimi et al. is there a discussion that the fibers have a matrix material that is independent of the flexible substrate. Thus, claim 6 is allowable for at least these reasons.

Claims 7-10, depending from allowable claim 6, are also allowable for at least the same reasons. However, those claims contain other elements or limitations that are also not disclosed or suggested in Murakimi et al. For example, claim 7 requires, inter alia, that a first fiber connector is mounted upon the plurality of legs in the stacked configuration. Again, Fig. 12,

referred to by the Examiner as disclosing this claim element, does not disclose or suggest a first connector (a single connector) mounted to a plurality of legs in a stacked configuration. In fact, the Examiner admitted that there is a connector for each of the legs in Murakimi et al. Office Action at p. 4. Therefore, this claim and the other claims depending from allowable claim 6 are also allowable.

The Examiner then rejected claim 11 indicating that Murakimi et al. discloses an optical connecting article including a main body comprising a flexible substrate (42) and a plurality of optical fibers (2) mounted upon the substrate, and arranged in a plurality of groups proximate an edge of the substrate with each group including at least one optical fiber; and a plurality of legs including first (43), second (43) and third (43) legs extending outwardly from the edge of the main body, each leg comprising the optical fibers (2) of a respective group and a matrix material for binding the optical fibers of the respective group together, the legs disposed in a stacked configuration with the first and second legs transitioning so as to overlies the third leg at different locations along a length of the third leg. Again the Examiner referred to Figs. 12-15. Office Action at p. 5.

In referring to element 43 in Murakimi et al. for the first, second and third legs, the Examiner has used the legs of three different articles (and substrates), not a single article with three legs disposed in a stacked configuration as required by claim 11. Also, as noted above, the optical fibers in Murakimi et al. are encapsulated and in a planar shape. Thus, claim 11 is allowable over Murakimi et al. for at least these reasons.

Claims 12-15, depending from allowable claim 11, are also allowable for at least the same reason. However, those claims contain other elements or limitations that are also not disclosed in Murakimi et al. For example, claim 14 requires, inter alia, that a first fiber connector is mounted upon the plurality of legs in the stacked configuration. Again, Fig. 12, referred to by the Examiner as disclosing this claim element, does not disclose or suggest a first connector (a single connector) mounted to a plurality of legs in a stacked configuration. In fact, the Examiner admitted that there is a connector for each of the legs in Murakimi et al. Office Action at p. 6. Therefore, this claim and the other claims depending from claim 11 are also allowable.

In rejecting claim 16, the Examiner indicated that Murakimi et al. discloses a method of fabricating an optical circuit including providing a main body comprising a flexible substrate (32, 42) and a plurality of groups of optical fibers (2) proximate an edge of and adhered to the flexible substrate, each group including at least one optical fiber; positioning a first group of optical fibers (2) so as to overlies a second group of optical fibers; and coating the first group of optical fibers with a matrix material once the first group of optical fibers is positioned to overlies the second group of optical fibers. The Examiner also referred to Figs. 12-18 and their respective portions of the specification. However, as noted above with respect to the apparatus claims, Murakimi et al. fails to disclose the claimed method.

Claim 16 requires, inter alia, positioning a first group of optical fibers so as to overlies a second group of optical fibers; and coating the first group of optical fibers with a matrix material once the first group of optical fibers is positioned to overlies the second group of optical

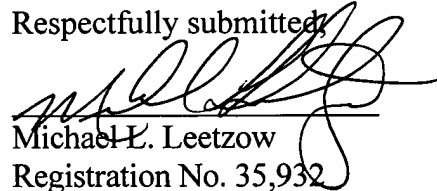
fibers. In contrast, the optical fibers of Murakimi et al. are all encapsulated in the same plane, not in a different planes as required by the claims. Thus, the reference fails to disclose or suggest the claimed invention.

Claims 17, 18, and 21, depending from claim 16, are allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 1-21 are allowable for the reasons stated above and Applicants request that the Examiner pass this application to issue. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned to discuss any issues.

Applicant brings to the attention of the Examiner a Revocation Of Power Of Attorney And Grant Of New Power And Change Of Correspondence Address was received by the Office on December 9, 2002, revoking all prior Powers of Attorney and appointing the undersigned as the attorney of record. Another copy of the that paper is included for the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,



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